A

SERMON

Preached before the

UNIVERSITY

OF

OXFORD,

On St. *Andrews-day.*

By *T. S.* M. A. and Chaplain of *New-College.*

Tho: Striplin M. A. &c.

LONDON

Printed by *T. B.* for *R. Sherlock*, Bookseller in *OXFORD*, 1683.

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2 TIM. II. 12.

If we ſuffer, we ſhall alſo reign with him.

THERE never was any Nation ſo barbarous or illiterate, but ſtill had ſome notions of a God, and of that worſhip and adoration that ought to be paid unto him, as the Author and Conſerver of their Beings; but ſuch is the corruption of human nature, ſuch the perverſneſs of our wills and affections, that even the beſt of them have been always unwilling to obey his injunctions, when they went beyond what the Law of Nature dictated unto them: To do as they would be done unto, to love the man that did them a kindneſs, theſe precepts might be conſented to; but to do good for evil, to love thoſe that hated them, and to ſuffer afflictions with patience, and injuries without the leaſt thought of revenge, theſe are rejected as ſoon as propoſed: To offer in ſacrifice a Bull or a Goat, the firſtlings of their Cattel, or firſt fruits of their Grounds, they are willing, when it is propoſed

as a means to appeaſe the Divine wrath; but to crucifie their members, and ſacrifice their beloved luſts, theſe are more dear than all other worldly enjoyments; and to part with them they cannot be wrought upon. Thus, although the Goſpel for the excellency of its precepts, the nobleneſs and generoſity of its deſign, and its admirable fitneſs for the accompliſhment of it, was moſt agreable to the pureſt and ſublimeſt Reaſon, conſiſting chiefly in a regulation of the mind and ſpirit, and ſuch kind of practices as might promote the good of humane ſocieties, and moſt effectually conduce to the perfecting our natures, and rendering them happy; yet becauſe it was fraught with ſuch precepts as were deſtructive to their complacencies and carnal ſecurities, and laid the greateſt reſtraints upon their paſſions and inclinations, by no means complying with the former, or anſwering the expectations of the latter, it found no better entertainment at firſt in the Gentile world, than to be derided and ſcoffed at, and its profeſſors perſecuted even unto death, by thoſe with whoſe intereſt it could no ways conſiſt: for being immerſed in all manner of ſenſual pleaſure, and wholly become ſlaves to their paſſions and their luſts, their judgments were corrupted

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and biaſſed by their vicious inclinations, and 'twas as bad as death to them to undergo the ſtrict forbearances Chriſtianity would oblige them to. This Religion, ſay they, would force us to part with all whatſoever renders our lives pleaſant in the world, our luſts to be ſatisfied by no means, injuries and affronts not only to be forgiven, but all kind of offices to be returned inſtead of revenge; tribulation and perſecution to be endur'd without the leaſt regret, or the greateſt detriment, even to the loſs of our lives, to be ſuffered with conſtancy and patience: This cannot be endured, Nature prompts every one to ſeek his own preſervation, and maintain his being; this is the ready way to deſtroy it: That which animates and enlivens our Souls, and makes them capable of performing actions ſuitable to the dignity of their natures, is by the ſeverity of this Religion withheld; that which makes our lives happy and pleaſant muſt be parted with; Father and Mother, Friends and Relations, and fair and ample poſſeſſions muſt be left and forſaken: This can be nothing but the politick devices of men, to whom Providence has not been ſo kind, who endeavour to render our lives as uneaſie as their own. To bear injuries patiently derogates too from that prin-

principle of magnanimity ingrafted in man, who is not yet reduced ſo low, or become ſo degenerate as not to revenge an injury, not to do harm to him that plots and contrives his ruine; and we may as well deny ſuſtenance to the body when its hungry, or take no notice of an object preſented to the ſight, as deny to gratifie our inclinations, or ſatisfie our domineering luſts; Nature is equally concerned in both: But oh the ſottiſhneſs of carnal reaſoning! How miſerably art thou miſtaken vain man, making thy ſelf no more than equal to the Beaſts that periſh? to what purpoſe then haſt thou receiv'd thoſe noble faculties of thy ſoul, thy underſtanding and thy will, but with the one, that thou mighteſt apprehend aright what is beſt for thee, and chuſe that which is ſo with the other? So that if thou have the greateſt averſation to what is commanded thee by thy ſenſual faculties, yet here the intellectual are to be called in to thy aid, which preſently will paſs their ſentence, If what thou ſuffereſt be for thy good, it is to be embraced. The certainty of which aſſertion we have evidently ſet forth unto us in ſundry places of Scripture, as well as in this of Saint *Paul* to *Timothy*, where he ſtirs him up to caution, care and diligence, and fidelity in the diſ-

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charge of his office, on occaſion of the creeping hereſies of the *Gnoſticks* ſtollen in among them, which had much debauched the people of *Aſia*, by indulging them in all manner of licentious practices: He adviſes him not to ſuffer himſelf, or his flock to be inticed or to fall in love with their profane Diſcourſes and pernicious Doctrines, but to repel them and all their ſollicitations with the greateſt induſtry, and be ready to undergo the ſevereſt afflictions, rather than to part with any precept of that Goſpel delivered unto him, or to recede from the leaſt tittle of his Faith: And this Saint *Paul* does, by putting him in remembrance how he himſelf had ſuffered at *Antioch*, *Iconium*, and *Lyſtra*, and how the Lord had delivered him out of all, *Chap.* 3. 11. However if it were God's Will that he ſhould not eſcape his enemies hands, but that they ſhould prevail ſo far, even to the taking his life, yet he had this comfort and aſſurance, this was moſt certain, a faithful ſaying, That if we are dead with him, we ſhall live with him; if we ſuffer, we ſhall likewiſe reign with him. In which words we have a duty and a reward annexed unto it: In the Duty I ſhall conſider theſe following particulars:

1ſt. That to be a true Chriſtian, doth imply a neceſ-

neceſſity of ſuffering; and that becauſe Chriſtianity is a ſuffering Religion. 2*dly*. The Reaſonableneſs of ſuffering, and that, 1. Becauſe Chriſt commands it. 2. Becauſe he ſuffered for us. 3. That it is our greateſt intereſt to ſuffer. 4. I ſhall conſider the Reward we purchaſe.

Firſt then, To be a true Chriſtian doth imply a neceſſity of ſuffering; and that becauſe Chriſtianity is a ſuffering Religion.

Chriſtianity bears ſuch a contrariety unto the inclinations of our natures, and the inticements of our fleſh, the allurements of the world, and the ſuggeſtions of the Devil; that they who do ſincerely embrace its precepts, muſt neceſſarily ſuffer much by theſe Three potent enemies, againſt which we in our Baptiſm are ſigned with the Croſs, as a Flag of defiance.

Firſt, We ſuffer by the inclinations of our Natures, and the inticements of our Fleſh.

If we look upon man as he is by Nature, and as he is a Chriſtian, we ſhall find a great alteration; by Nature he purſues every object that invites, and makes uſe of any inſtruments that ſerves his deſigns; he reſolves to compaſs what he deſires, and he will gratifie his paſſions at any rate; he conſiders only his preſent enjoyment, without the diſmal conſequences that attend his actions:

actions: if his Endeavours are Disappointed he thinks himself miserable, but if they succeed, in a most prosperous condition. The case is quite otherwise as a Christian, he is so far altered from what he was before, that he seems to have changed his very being; for whereas before his desires were as large as his Nature, and he might let fly at whatsoever his humour or his fancy did suggest unto him, his actions before free and directed to what his lusts prompted him, now he is to steer by a regular Compass, to be circumscribed within the streight limits of Right and Wrong, he is to scan over every object, and not in the least to deviate from his Rule, or let a circumstance be wanting, or out of its place; so far from giving way to his Passions, that he must stifle them in their birth; so far from pampering his lusts, that he is strictly enjoyned to crucifie them; so that the man must necessarily endure great conflicts within himself: his carnal Inclinations direct him this way, and his Religion commands him to steer a quite contrary course; what the one inclines him to persue and love, the other bids him fly and hate; what the one would have him cherish, the other obliges him to mortifie: For he that is Christs hath crucified the flesh with the Affections and Lusts

thereof; a ſevere Diſcipline this! in which a man muſt act his fierceſt Anger on his deareſt Friends; thus man ſuffers by living in enmity with himſelf, by ſtabbing his Deſires and crucifying his beloved Luſts.

Nature could never yet ſuggeſt into any one, the hatred of his own fleſh or the luſts thereof; but Criſtianity which is not framed to the Dictates of depraved nature, muſt, and will readily paſs ſentence upon them, if they were good or profitable they were to be permitted; but being evil and hurtful by all means to be ſuppreſt: but alas! our domineering luſts, and rebellious paſſions are not ſo ſoon conquered; it will be no eaſie thing to bring the body under, when it has been given to Luxury; to uſe it to temperance and Sobriety when it has been habituated to exceſs; 'twill be no eaſie matter to reſtrain and curb the emiſſions of anger, when they have been permitted the looſe rein; or to lay aſide the hatred of an enemy, when we have often taſted the ſeeming pleaſure of revenge: And then how hard a matter will it be to bring down pampered wantonneſs, by the bread and water of affliction? For what a maſterleſs Tyrant is youth in the height of blood? how impatient is he if he is deprived of his former careſſes?

reſſes? how will he fret, and rage, and hazard any thing, eſtate and life are both devoted to her, and he will part with the one, and lay down the other, rather than he will quit his pleaſures, or reſt himſelf from the amorous embraces of his Beloved? So that conſidering how prone our inclintions are to vice, and how hard it is for us to overcome them, we muſt of neceſſity ſuffer much before we can bring them under, and make them yield obedience to our Reaſon and the Goſpel precepts, that we may be true Chriſtians.

The next enemy we have to ingage with, and ſuffer by, is the world; Saint *John* commands us in his Epiſtle, *not to ſet our affections on things of the world, for the love of the world is enmity with God*, who ought to be the greateſt object of our love; ſo that we cannot be ſaid to love God, if the love of the world dwell within us. By the world is meant the wicked, the wicked world, the greateſt part of mankind, who are ſo far from obeying the Goſpel maxims, and thoſe precepts Chriſtianity obliges them too, that they may vie with the very heathen in their evil cuſtomes. How do they admire and dote upon the oſtentatious bravery of their pomps and vanities, outdoing thoſe that they uſed in

their, Triumphs and their Games? How do they indulge themſelves in Luxury, Riot, and immoderate drinkings, exeeding their *Bacchanals* and *Saturnals*? nay how much more do they adorn it's honors and riches, Idolizing them as the ſole Divinities? how do they conſecrate their whole care in their acqueſt, and make them the deſign of all their projects, and center of all their actions? how common is it to ſee the Ambitious man ſweat with the pains he takes to arrive to ſome eminency, where he may ſecurely tread upon thoſe, who before were his equals? how does he imploy his whole ſtrength, and credit of all his friends to be above them? how common is it to ſee the covetous worldling ſpending the greateſt of his life in oppreſſing and grinding the face of the poor, and then ſet braiding upon his bags, thanking his Age that hath made him deaf to the louder cries of the Orphan & Widows? how do another ſort of men indulge themſelves in all manner of ſenſuality, drowning their Reaſon, and ſuffocating their bodies with the noiſom vapours of putrefaction and rottenneſs, and then declame againſt the ſevere life and devouter actions of the true Chriſtian?

In the midſt of theſe Sons of the Earth is the devout Chriſtian placed, who muſt exſpect to

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ſuffer from them all; for his Innocency upbraids their vicious Lives, and the Maxims he obſerves contradicts their beloved Principles; and therefore he is derided for his Religious behaviour towards his God, and ſcoffed at for his great zeal in the obſervance of his Precepts. For his humility and meekneſs, duties ſo often recommended to us by our Saviour, and a bleſſedneſs pronounced unto them, yet by the Ambitious man he is accounted as one of a ſervile Diſpoſition, a Temper fit only for the Abject; one of no Spirit or deſign in the World; by no means qualified for the Devices of the Politick, or fit to manage the weighty affairs, and ſubtile Intrigues of State. For his Liberality and Charity to the Poor, Precepts ſo ſtrictly enjoyned, and without which we are no better than ſounding braſs, or tinckling cimbals; Yet he is accuſed of the covetous worldling, of the greateſt Simplicity and Folly, throwing away the greateſt part of his Eſtate upon thoſe, he can expect no requital from; one that is ſhort ſlighted, and looks not beyond the affairs of a day, has no care for futurity; when hunger, or thirſt, cold or nakedneſs may oppreſs him, then he has nothing to ſupply the one, or cloth the other; whileſt he may ſing a *requiem* to his

ſoul,

ſoul, having ſecured himſelf, by laying up in ſtore for many years. For his Temperance and Sobriety, he is by the ſenſual man reckned a mere puny, not fit for ſociety, or to keep company with the moſt refined ſort of men, the wits of the age. And for his Chaſtity, that is imputed to his Weakneſs, and Impotence. But his ſufferings were very light, if his enemies perceiv'd no farther; but they often times take away his Liberty and his Life too; for though one would think his innocence might here protect him, yet thoſe who are imployed in a work by the Devil, have ſeveral ways to bring it about, and boggle not at any thing to effect their Deſigns: if their firſt Projects do not work effectually, they will themſelves commit the greateſt wickedneſs (as *Nero* did in firing the City) rather than miſs their aims, and alledge the poor Chriſtian to be the Author, makeing ſure of his deſtruction, and avoid their own.

Thus is the ſincere Chriſtian look'd upon as fit for nothing but to be impoſed on, a moſt abject, ſilly, pitiful Mortal; and the Precepts he obeys altogether ineffectual to render his life comfortable here, or happy hereafter; but it's by ſuch that prefer the bewitching pleaſures of ſin

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for a ſeaſon, that wholly give themſelves to their ſenſual Appetites, and that never were acquainted with that Comfort and Satisfaction, that ariſes from a ſerene and quiet Conſcience in the performance of Chriſts Precepts. The Devout Chriſtian knows that the way to be exalted in Chriſts Kingdom, is to be humble and meek, and wonders at the aſpirings of the Ambitious, and that great Toil and Labour he takes to arrive to the top of that Pinacle, where his ſtanding is uneaſie and his fall deadly; he deſpiſes the glittering of that gold, the covetous mans eyes are dazled with, and he himſelf inchanted by; he is ſo far from Idolizing it, that he counts it no better than the Earth he treads on, and can part with it with much more eagerneſs than he received it; by this means laying up for himſelf Treaſures in Heaven, and does not in the leaſt diſtruſt God (if he have wherewithal) to feed when he is hungry, that feedeth the Ravens, and Cloth him too, that cloaths the Lillies of the fields. He is content to go alone in paths of Piety and Vertue, flying the Company and Jollity of the World, which may make him hazard his innocence, if not contract their vices; he will not converſe with the Impious and Profane, and

therefore

therefore they ſhoot out their arrows againſt him, even bitter words: But makes his Vertue his companion, and ſeeks his greateſt Felicity in his Solitude and the Tranquillity of his Soul; if his thirſt be quenched, and his hunger ſatisfied, he matters not their flouds of liquors, or their coſtly Delicacies: In a word, if he have but food and raiment, things convenient and neceſſary for him, he is therewith content: But if they proceed, by their Helliſh Policy, to take away this his Liberty and his Life too, then he reſolves patiently to ſuffer for his God, who he never has ſeen; which is the Crown of his Faith, the Confidence of his Hope, and his greateſt Charity.

The next Enemy we ſuffer by, is the Devil, and he is the moſt inveterate; whoſe chiefeſt buſineſs it has been, ſince he was baniſhed, by his cunning Artifice and crafty Wiles, to delude and entrap weak men, that he hath a ſhare of thoſe Torments into which he was caſt, for his preſumptuous ſins; not that he does it to alleviate his Pains, or render his Torments the leſs grieveous; but that he endeavours to thwart Gods holy Purpoſes, in tempting thoſe to commit ſin, whom God

hath

hath conſigned to happineſs. Thus no ſooner had Man his being, but he Plots and Contrives his ruine; and having ſuch lucky ſucceſs in his firſt enterpriſe, doubts not of a ſecond overthrow: but he perceives that the Chriſtian is grown wary, and his bait that worked ſo effectual heretofore, will not ſo eaſily decoy him into Deſtruction: 'tis not now to perſwade them, that they ſhall be as God that will effect his deſigns; and therefore he conſiders the Temperature of our Bodies, and Diſpoſition of our Minds; and where he finds what ſin we are moſt prone to, and where moſt inclinable to let it in, there he ſets up his Standard, and Aſſaults us in this Poſture: he ſtands uſing his cunning Devices to undermine us, and his Strategems to overcome us; ſometimes he ſubtily diſſembles, making ſhew of ſome Good that may accrew unto us, to expel out of our innocent minds all jealouſie and ſuſpicion of Evil; he gilds over his baits, to make them ſeem pleaſant to the eye; but if they be ſearched into, we find them (like the Apples of *Sodom*) nothing but ſtench and rottenneſs within; if his ſpecious pretences are rejected, how cunningly ſoever varniſhed over with the colour of Virtue, ſo that his deſigns are blaſted,

and his endeavours to work upon us rendred ineffectual, then he will counterfeit flight to make us draw off our Garrisons; and when we are eager in the persuit, as *Hannibal* did to the *Romans*, he returns, sets upon us, and gives us a general Defeat. But he that is a good Soldier of Jesus Christ, always keeps a strong guard about him, does not leave the least gap, through which the enemy may enter; but plants his strongest Garrison there, where he is most likely to be assaulted; and then though he suffer the greatest hardships, undergo the greatest damage, and be beset with the greatest danger, even the losing of his life; yet he girds up his loins, and summons up all his faculties, and nothing is able to daunt his Courage, or dishearten his Industry in withstanding all the assaults of his Enemy; he resolves to lay down his life rather than yield unto him; and thinks not this Precept of Christ too severe and rigid, grievous or unreasonable, boldly to follow the Captain of his Salvation. Which brings me to the Second thing I design to speak to, The reasonableness of Suffering; and that, First, because Christ commands it. Secondly, Because he suffered for us.

Christ's Precepts are so full fraught with Purity

rity and Holineſs, Juſtice and Goodneſs, that they may juſtly challenge their pedigree from Heaven, and to have deriv'd their beings from the Father of goodneſs; ſo that he does require nothing, but what is moſt reaſonable. He that acts according to the eternal reaſons of an Omniſcient Power, of which ours in its primitive Perfection and Purity was but a Glance and Reflection; He that appeals to the faculties of men touching the equity of his Diſpenſations, as God did to his People; *Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?* Can no more diſcard Reaſon, than he can his Being; and that not becauſe he is not Omnipotent, but becauſe it would argue in him an Imperfection; but becauſe whatever runs counter to our inclination, is apt to be irreconcilable to our reaſon; and that was the Reaſon that Chriſtianity in its infancy met with ſuch cold entertainment in the world, becauſe men ſo value themſelves of their reaſon, that they will admit nothing but what hath ſtood the tryal of that criterion; and thereupon ſome have preſumed to dictate to Heaven, and preſcribe to the Almighty: Becauſe, I ſay, that ſome have arrived to that pitch of impudence, to reaſon Chriſt out of his Divinity; its no wonder if others, when their fleſh

and blood is concerned, endeavour to argue him out of his Humanity, I mean, the reaſonableneſs of his Precepts; they look no farther than their outſide, and becauſe they ſeem terrible to their fleſh, they preſently conclude them againſt their reaſon, and run like Children from their friends, when they have put vizards on: But if they would take the pains to conſider the deſign of them, and the reward they purchaſe, they would find them to be for their greateſt good, and exactly conſonant to the dictates of right reaſon. For what can be more reaſonable, than that hardſhips and ſufferings ſhould accompany thoſe Precepts, to which God has annexed ſo great a reward? and that the way ſhould be ſteep, rugged and difficult, that leads to eternal glory? Nature hath prepared Crowns for the Valiant, and Triumphs for the Conqueror; but he ſhall wade for them through blood; he ſhall firſt undergo the Severity of Military Diſcipline, the hardſhips of the Field, and the danger of a Battle. God hath alſo provided a *Canaan* for his Children, and a Land flowing with Milk and Honey for his Inheritance; but they ſhall firſt run through an Egyptian bondage; they ſhall travel for it through the Red-Sea; they ſhall endure the hard-

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ſhips of the Wilderneſs,& the *tædium* of a War: And he that ſhall murmur or repine at the one, ſhall certainly be defeated of the other. For ſo it happened of all the Children of *Iſrael* that were numbred in *Sina*, not one beſide *Caleb* and *Joſhua* were permitted to enter into the Promiſed Land, becauſe they provoked God to Anger in the Wilderneſs, and murmur'd at him in the Deſart. Chriſt has likewiſe purchaſed for us a better *Canaan*, even eternal manſions in Heaven; but men muſt not expect to go thither on a Feather-bed, leſt it ſhould prove but the deluſion of a Dream, and they awake into a worſer Eternity; He that was made perfect through ſufferings, hath told us, *Mat.* 7. 14. that, that way is narrow, and that there is not room for a Drunkard to ſtagger in, or the Latitudinarian to expatiate either his Principles or his Practice; he muſt crucifie his Affections and Luſts, that will ſhare with him in his Kingdom; he muſt endure Perſecutions and Sufferings, yea, and Death it ſelf for his ſake, who hath redeemed him from a worſe: In a word, he muſt take up his Croſs that will be his Diſciple; and he that will wear a Crown of Glory, muſt, at leaſt, be ready to wear a Crown of Thorns.

This being then evident, that becauſe Chriſt hath

hath commanded us to ſuffer, therefore it is reaſonable; I ſhall farther make it appear to be highly the reaſonableneſs of it; and that,

Becauſe Chriſt commands it.

Chriſt commands his Diſciples nothing, but he inforces it with an Argument from himſelf; he muſt firſt ſuffer for us, and through theſe ſufferings enter into Glory; then he enjoyns them as the means for us to arrive unto it; for thus he told his Apoſtles before they were ſent forth to the converſion of the world; *You are my ſheep, and I am the good Shepherd, yet I muſt ſend you among Wolves, and expoſe you unto the unmerciful fury and rage of cruel Tyrants, who will not only ſlight and contemn your Doctrin and Perſons, but force you to undergo the ſharpeſt pains and exquiſite tortures; and for your farther encouragement, deprive you of your Honour and your Lives for my ſake, after they have dealt ſo by me.* The ſadneſs of the news might ſomewhat ſurpriſe them, when but a little before they were queſtioning among themſelves, which ſhould be greateſt in his Kingdom; but it did not at all abate their courage! or diſhearten them from executing their office. Men certainly much ſtrengthned from above! moſt of them poor and of low deſcent, but Fiſhermen, who could not

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boaſt of that ſprightly blood, great Heroes pretend to have running in their veins; but through Gods aſſiſtance, there was nothing able to daunt the courage of a Chriſtian, but they reſolved to behave themſelves as ſtout and undiſturbed in their ſufferings for Chriſt, as they were willing to dye for him their Lord and Maſter, who not long after was treated by his enemies, as he had foretold; for his Converſation was ſlighted and contemned, his Doctrine derided and ſcoffed at; and his Miracles were ſaid to be done by the help of Magick, and the aſſiſtance of the Prince of Devils: his perſon was vilified, and ſoon after put to the moſt Barbarous, Cruel, and Shameful Death, that of the Croſs: And to behold the Son of God, Omnipotence it ſelf, thus hanging on the Croſs, cruelly murdered, by the moſt wicked, evil and malicious men; to behold him, who could have Legions of Angels to his reſcue, or have deſtroyed his enemies with the leaſt blaſt of his mouth, willingly ſubmitting himſelf to the will and power of his cruel Murderers, and all this for our ſakes, to make a full Attonement and Satisfaction to his Father for our ſins, and free us from the wrath to come; Certainly we cannot grudge or repine,

pine when we ſuffer for him, or tax his Precepts of the leaſt unreaſonableneſs; but rejoyce, as did his holy Apoſtles, who counted it all joy, when they were to enter into Tribulation; for they betook themſelves to their *Officium*, as ſoon as they had received their Commiſſion; and Preached Chriſts Doctrine with the pureſt Zeal, and in the true Evidence and Demonſtration of the Holy Spirit; and for their pains and travel, they were traduced for the vileſt offenders, and made as the filth of this world; they were hated and perſued as enemies and diſturbers of the Peace: In a word, they were vilified and contemned, expoſed to Pain and Tortures, and then to Death it ſelf; all which they ſuffered with perfect Conſtancy and Patience, being aſſured that it was for his ſake, who had endured mueh more for them.

Thus was our Religion and her Votaries treated for Chriſt, at its firſt entrance into the world; no ſooner had the glimmerings of the Goſpel been diſplayed, but preſently clouds and vapours riſe up, which ſtrive to extinguiſh its Light, or, at leaſt, ſo to interpoſe, that they might hinder its progreſs from comeing to thoſe that lived in Darkneſs and in the ſhadow of Death: but as they were altogether

gether unable to put out its Light, ſo neither could they ſtop it in its progreſs: For the All-wiſe Providence was pleaſed to deſign, that Chriſtianity ſhould be propagated by Sufferings, and grow ſtrong by thoſe very means which were uſed to weaken and extirpate it; for it was not to be done with Arms, or Faction, or the Favour of great Men; not by the cunning Sophiſtry of Philoſophers, or the perſwaſive Rhetorick of Orators; only by a naked propoſal of plain evident Truth, with a firm reſolution of ſuffering and dying for it; by which it hath ſubdued all kind of Perſecution, and ſurmounted whatever diſcouragement or reſiſtance could be layd in its way; *Sanguis enim Martyrum erat ſemen Eccleſiæ:* which ſuddenly grew up and ſpread its branches through every City of the World and Province. For their greateſt Enemies, when they beheld ſuch an undaunted courage in aſſerting, ſuch conſtancy in profeſſing that Religion which would infallibly work their deſtruction; were inclined to believe the hand of God to have upheld, and ſtrengthned them, and that it could proceed from no other but him, they preſently commenced Chriſtians, and believed that to ſuffer for Chriſt, was their greateſt Intereſt, and to dye for him their greateſt Gain.

Which brings me to the next particular in order to be ſpoken to:

That to ſuffer for Chriſt is our greateſt Intereſt.

It has always been found a very hard matter to perſwade the Senſual man to believe, that Sufferings can either procure his Pleaſure or his Profit; for looking no farther than his ſenſual Pleaſure, and his preſent Enjoyment, he lays out his whole care in the Preſervation of himſelf, in the Satisfaction of his deſires, in defending his body from harm, and ſecuring himſelf from any thing that may annoy or hurt him: This Principle is preſſed ſo home unto him by the Dictates of his Nature, that he takes it for granted, he is to deny all commands, neglect all injunctions to the contrary; for he is ſure, if he fails in this, all his pleaſures ſuddenly vaniſh, and his greateſt enjoyments come to an end; and poor man he miſerably periſhes, and for want of due care of himſelf, procures his own deſtruction. But, alas! if he would but conſider and ſearch into himſelf, it would preſently appear unto him, that by how much the more Pleaſure and Satisfaction a man takes from the delight of his Mind, than he does from that of his Body; by ſo much he is the happier, as to his preſent eſtate; for beſides the excerciſing of his Vertues, Humility, Patience, and Charity,

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which otherwiſe would lye hid, he enjoys the ſecurity of his Mind, a quiet and peaceable Conſcience void of offence, that fears no evil, becauſe it has done none: And that there is ſuch a real Joy concealed under apparent Miſeries, is evident from the Sufferer himſelf; that holy Pride he diſcovers in all his actions, thoſe pleaſing looks that continually poſſeſs his Countenance, are certain evidence of the tranquility of his Mind. Tempeſts do not diſturb his repoſe, and he never ſeems more unſhaken, than when he is toſſed about; he is ſo ſtable and permanent in all his diſaſters, that if the world ſhould fall in pieces, he would not be concerned. Then let the Worldling lay aſide his Honours and his Riches, his Pride and Luxury, which are ſo far from procuring real Pleaſure, that there is nothing ariſes from them, but trouble and diſſatisfaction. The Greateſt the Ambitious man aims at, is no longer pleaſent unto him, than when he is in the perſuit; for when he poſſeſſes it, he is puſhed on by the inquietude of his deſires, and thurſts after freſh honours: Riches never ſatisfie, for when they are locked up in the Cheſt, the deſire is ſtill after more. Pride and Luxury have ſo little content in them, that one is a Diſeaſe of the Mind, the,

other breeds diſeaſes to afflict the Body; nothing can be ſaid to be permanent, or to have contentment in it, but the joy of a wiſe man, who reſts ſecure when the greateſt violence is exerciſed on his perſon; whoſe Mind ſtands firm as a Rock, when his body is ſhaken aſunder; and the afflicting body does not ſo much loſe his courage, as it ſtrengthens and confirms it; he reſembles thoſe Stars that are cleareſt in the moſt Tempeſtuous Weather, and have the greateſt luſtre when they ſhine through Miſts and Foggy Exhalations. This being premiſed, I ſhall proceed to make it appear, to be his greateſt intereſt to ſuffer for Chriſt, even the loſs of his Life; becauſe it procures his eternal happineſs in the world to come: But here we have him objecting, that God-Almighty cannot love the man who he makes the object of his wrath; or conſign him to happineſs whom he ſo miſerably Puniſhes and Afflicts; that he can never be fit company for Saints and Angels in Heaven, who was contemned and hated, afflicted and tormented even unto Death here on earth. But the Example of our Saviour is a ſufficient anſwer to this, who was a man of ſorrows, rejected and deſpiſed, Wounded for our Tranſgreſſions, bruiſed for our iniquities.

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We are assured that God is Holy, Wise, and Good, and that he can do nothing misbecoming or unworthy of those Attributes; and therefore we ought to rest satisfied, that it is his Will that we shall be thus qualified for Heaven, that he brings us unto him by the very same means and method he did his Beloved Son; for he chastises every one whom he receiveth, *that these light afflictions may work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. 4. 17.

But Christ, he reply's, died for us to preserve our lives, and he will not have us to dye, or destroy us, after he has given us our lives; but he dyed not to preserve our temporal lives, but to procure for us eternal life in Heaven; to obtain which, we must suffer even the loss of present life for him; *for he that endeavours to save his life, shall lose it; and he that loses it for Christs sake shall save it*, Mark 8. 35. Life must be despised here on earth, if we will enjoy an honourable place in Heaven; so that Martyrdom is an ingenious Tyrant, that kills us to save us; and an innocent crime, that overwhelms with confusion, to Crown us with Glory: If we believe *Tertullian*, it is an obliging Cruelty, that tears away our lives, to give them us again; that despises us, to make us rich; and

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making us to be imitators of the Son of God, assures us to have part in his felicity. This made St. *Paul* to rejoyce, that he was thought worthy to suffer for Christ Jesus; and this made the Primitive Christians prefer Disgrace to Honour, Poverty to Riches, Torments to Pleasures, and Death it self to Life; their minds were so inchanted with the hopes of Futurity, that it charmed their Grief, confirmed their Constancy, and rendred them victorious in the midst of all their Afflictions. For with what Patience and Constancy did they suffer in the times of Persecution, when they were hurried from one place to another, not suffered to confer with freedom, or breath with safety! when they were driven into Prisons, and and loaded with Chains, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, and then brought out to their Execution upon the Rack, Wheel, or Gridiron! they were so far from murmuring, or being disturbed in their Sufferings, that they rejoyced in the midst of their Tortures,and thanked their Executioners for tearing them in pieces! Since then we have had such a cloud of Witnesses who have gone before us, and obtained the end of their Hopes, even the Salvation of their Souls, let us not be discouraged, or be disheartned in our duty;

but

but run with patience the race that is ſet before us, reſolving boldly to follow the Captain of our, as well as their, Salvation. But we cannot become Martyrs for Chriſt, as did his holy Apoſtles, and thoſe in the Primitive Times, ſince our Religion is generally embraced, and the Croſs ſits as an Ornament on the Foreheads of Kings and Emperours: but although we do not ſuffer for him in the propagating his Religion among Heathens and Infidels, yet we may ſuffer nearer home; we have enemies in our breaſts, for this houſe of clay is divided againſt it ſelf, and wageth more than Civil War within us; ſo that every Chriſtian is permited to be his one Executioner, and without ſwerving from his Duty, to be his own Tyrant and Perſecutor; and he that ſuffers by afflicting his Body, and contending with infamous pleaſures, by conquering his Paſſions, and Subduing his Luſts, by humbling his Pride, and ſtifling in his Breaſt the deſire of Riches and Honours, may very well boaſt himſelf to be in the liſt and number of theſe Illuſtrious Heroes, whom God was pleaſed to honour with Martyrdom in the firſt ages of Chriſtianity, and then received them into his Eternal Manſions in Heaven: which brings me to my laſt Particular.

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The Reward we purchaſe by Suffering. *We ſhall alſo reign with him.*

Chriſtianity is a life of Faith and Hope faſtned on future Promiſes, which God will accompliſh when we have done what he appoints us in the interim to do or ſuffer; for we cannot expect that he ſhould ſatisfie our longing, or fulfil our deſires to all eternity, unleſs we fulfil his Will; for our Time of Trial in this Life, we muſt behave our ſelves like our forerunner, to be worthy of him, and gain the victory here on Earth, before we Triumph and wear the Crown in Heaven. To deſcribe this place, expreſs its joys, or determine where it is, ſurpaſſeth the underſtanding of Man; ſince that very Apoſtle that ſeemed to have a glimpſe thereof hath left us only a negative Deſcription, *which neither Eye hath ſeen, nor ear heard, nor entred into the heart of man to conceive.* Let us not then endeavour to ſearch out what God hath thought to conceal, *Quid animum divinis conſiliis minorem fatigas?* ſay the Poet, Why doſt thou vex thy mind with the Decrees of the Almighty beyond thy reach? It is Heaven, what canſt thou know? that there is ſuch a place, we may aſſure our ſelves, ſince Truth it ſelf hath ſpoken it, and in it many Manſions too, where our Souls ſhall receive the full meaſure and compliment

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of Happiness, being rewarded with the Participation of Christ's Glory; and the boundless appetites of those spirits remain compleatly satisfied, In having a full and perfect knowledg and the fruition of the *Beatifick Vision.*

Knowledg is mans greatest perfection, it distinguishes him from his fellow creatures, and makes him to be Lord over them; nay, it makes a difference between one man and another; for by how much the more a man advances in it, by so much he is thought worthier and better than another: this makes us Toil and Labour in its acquest, and willing to increase in sorrow, that we may increase in knowledg. But what is it, we with so much difficulty have acquired? 'tis no more than that which shall be then, a Mole-hill to the greatest Mountain, nay, a Drop to the Ocean: For our greatest knowledg is but the least part of what we are ignorant; and *Socrates* himself said, that he knew nothing. Here indeed we do but darkly apprehend, and can but guess at Causes by their produced Effects; for if we endeavour to discover the Motions and Operations of the most inconsiderable creature, our understanding is presently gravelled, and our strongest reasoning at a stand, and we are forced

to cry out, *How unſearchable are his Judgments, and his ways paſt finding out?* But there we ſhall have a full and perfect knowledg, and be able to diſcern all things in their moſt Intricate and hidden Cauſes; for our knowledg ſhall be advanced into a full grown Science, and we ſhall arrive to the perfect Man, at the meaſure of the ſtature, and fullneſs of Chriſt. Here we, like the Spouſe in the *Canticles*, ſeek our Beloved onely in the dark, view onely the Picture of his Habitation, which is this Viſible World; behold only his back-parts in the Glaſs of his Creatures, and taſt ſomewhat more of him in his comfortable Ordinances, and but ſufficient to make us Sick with Love: but hereafter we ſhall ſee God face to face, know him as he is; nay, as we our ſelves are known; and knowing him, we ſhall know all things, for he is all in all. Nor ſhall we only know him as he is, but enjoy him too; our Happineſs ſhall conſiſt in the Contemplation of his moſt Divine Perfections, which muſt needs create Pleaſures as infinite as themſelves, that neither trouble nor ſorrow ſhall interrupt; for all tears ſhall be wiped from our Eyes; here ſhall be a perpetual joy, without the leaſt mixture of the Gall of Bitterneſs; and continual Praiſes iſſuing from our mouthes; for

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the *Pſalmiſt* ſays, That thoſe that dwell in his Houſe, will be ſtill praiſing him. Here the wicked do not approach to hurt us, nor the workers of iniquity to do us any harm; for the oppreſſor cannot take away our goods, nor the cruel Tyrant deprive us of our lives; we being as far above the envy of the one, as we are the malice of the other. Here a *David* may enjoy his beloved *Jonathan*, and be for ever free from the Fury and Rage of a perſecuting *Saul*. Here pious Souls enjoy, what *Socrates* of old could but wiſh for, the intimate converſe of thoſe brave Heroes that have gone before them; and Here with Angels and Spirits of Juſt men made perfect, we ſhall always be celebrating the excellencies of the Divine Perfections in the *Beatifick Viſion*.

Having an Eye then unto this ſo exceeding great reward, Let us reſolve (notwithſtanding the Malice of Men and Devils) faithfully to adhere to this our profeſſion, to obey its Precepts of ſuffering, even unto Death, with Patience & Conſtancy; that at the laſt our Innocence may break forth as the Lightning, and our juſt dealings as the Noon-day; and for this Life of Temporal Sufferings, we ſhall have an Eternal Life of Joy, in his preſcence, where there is fulneſs

ness of it; and at whose right hand there are Pleasures for evermore.

To which God of his infinite Mercy bring us all through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be ascribed, as is most due, all Honour, Glory, Praise, Might, Majesty and Dominion, now and for evermore.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore, Amen.

FINIS.